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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 27 October 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the information prepared by the Federal Ministry for Development, Science and Environment on the effects of sanctions on the environment in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 89.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



Annex

THE EFFECTS OF SANCTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia had participated very actively in international cooperation in the field of environment, which was particularly intensified after the first United Nations Conference on the Environment, held in 1972 in Stockholm. We can say with pride that it was at the proposal of the Yugoslav delegation that the 5th of July, the first day of the Conference, was declared World Environment Day and is marked each year all over the world.

Regrettably, General Assembly resolution 47/1 has made it impossible for Yugoslav participants to attend international gatherings devoted to the promotion of cooperation in environmental protection. The efforts of a United Nations Member in environmental protection have been reduced to those at the national level and it has been left to rely on its own modest material and human resources.

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, it was pointed out, in particular, that nothing could be achieved in the field of environment through isolated national efforts and that international cooperation needed to be enhanced in order to prepare countries, in institutional terms, for sustainable growth, development of science, education and informatics and promotion of decision-making processes.

Even though formally, as well as according to the interpretation of legal counsels of the United Nations Secretary-General, the environment is not covered by the sanctions, their disastrous effects are directly reflected in this field as well. They have threatened the fundamental right proclaimed by principle 1 of the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, according to which human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. The growing unemployment and poverty have also degraded principle 5 of the Declaration, according to which all States and all people cooperate in order to eradicate poverty and to more successfully meet human needs. The utilization of natural wealth and resources is being increased, including even those that are covered by the special protection regime; natural and cultural heritage is under threat; less scope is provided for society to invest in environmental protection and improvement; the risk of damage is growing; the supervision and monitoring possibilities are reduced etc.

There are many examples of how the sanctions have threatened the environment in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On this occasion, we only wish to bring to your attention the drastic example of air pollution in the town of Bor owing to the operation of the metallurgical-chemical plants of the mining-smelter basin under abnormal conditions.

The plant, which produces sulphuric acid from waste gases of the plants in Bor, had to halt its production because all sulphuric acid storages in Yugoslavia were full (60,000 tons of monohydrates). The fertilizer chemical plants in Prahovo had used imported raw phosphate and sulphuric acid from Bor.

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As a consequence of the sanctions, importation of phosphates was discontinued and utilization of sulphuric acid from Bor was halted. The complex production process which took decades to develop was discontinued. Instead of being used in the production of sulphuric acid, the by-products of the copper production are released into the air. Depending on the sulphur content in the ore, the presently released sulphur-dioxide concentration ranges from 1 to 8 per cent, or from 1,000 to 1,500 tons per day of sulphuric acid monohydrates.

The state of the environment in Bor and its surroundings has become critical, particularly at certain times (accident situations) when increased sulphur-dioxide concentrations (e.g., 6-8 per cent) coincide with adverse weather conditions (wind, low atmospheric pressure, humidity - dew or rain). The citizens of Bor as well as the population of the nearby villages have been affected, because sulphur-dioxide damages agricultural crops and forests.

The above problem can be resolved only provided that the contact sulphuric acid plants in Bor are put in operation to produce sulphuric acid required by the chemical industry facilities in Prahovo, which had been developed precisely for the purpose of neutralizing the sulphuric acid coming from the metallurgical facilities in Bor. To that end, it would be necessary to import 50,000 tons of raw phosphates a month.

In addition to air pollution, the area of Bor is also exposed to intensive water pollution and soil degradation. In the period preceding the sanctions, the Environmental Protection Project for the area of Bor was prepared and financial support was requested from international institutions. Because of the sanctions, the project implementation activities have been stopped.

Fortunately, no accidents have been registered in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia thus far as a result of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and their removal, although, in the case of "hazardous waste" disposal in Albania, there was an imminent threat in the border areas of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that could have had unforeseeable consequences. However, accidents caused by hazardous waste disposal and movement in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia territory have been registered. The worst accident that happened and that still poses a potential threat in terms of river pollution is the one involving the hazardous waste dump in Mojkovac (Montenegro), in November 1992. Owing to the urgent intervention and assistance of the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the European Economic Community a great environmental disaster was prevented. This is a classic example which shows that environmental protection problems know no boundaries and that their settlement calls for the participation of the international community.

At the international gatherings which they attended, the Yugoslav delegations pointed out how dangerous it is to isolate and marginalize individual areas and States from global environmental activities. The participation of Yugoslav representatives in international gatherings was challenged, immediately after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/1, by invoking the undefined status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international organizations and the application of the resolutions imposing

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extremely rigid and partial sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Owing to the sanctions, Yugoslavia does not participate in the preparatory meetings of the international conference "The Environment for Europe", which it had initiated, and which is due to be held in Sofia in October 1995.

It is absurd that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is not participating in the preparation and implementation of the regional projects for protection of the Danube and the Mediterranean, or in the settlement of global environmental problems (protection of the ozone layer, climatic changes). International financial, scientific and technical assistance for the implementation of priority environmental protection projects in Yugoslavia has also been halted due to the sanctions.

While Yugoslav representatives are prevented from taking part in the normal work of international organizations, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia keeps receiving requests to honour its financial obligations to these international organizations. It is even threatened by expulsion from the organizations, one of which it was a founding member, because of its failure to discharge outstanding dues, which cannot be settled given the suspension of payments transactions.

Bearing in mind the fact that the field of the environment is not formally covered by sanctions, and that the process of lifting of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been initiated by the Security Council in resolution 943 (1994), we expect the international community to renew the very good cooperation in this field and to contribute towards the rehabilitation of damages incurred as a result of the unjustly imposed sanctions.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has, in fact, been prevented from applying and ratifying the international treaties in the field of environment. Yugoslavia is party to 51 international environmental treaties and is willing to duly perform the commitments made and take an equal part in the settlement of environmental protection problems.
